



Commissioner

Le Commissaire

File #: OPP-7900

March 11, 2019

Mr. Tom Stamatakis
President
Canadian Police Association
100-141 Catherine Street
Ottawa ON K2P 1C3

Mr. Rob Jamieson
President
Ontario Provincial Police Association
119 Ferris Lane
Barrie ON L4M 2Y1

Mr. Mike Adair
President
Ontario Police Memorial Foundation
119 Ferris Lane
Barrie ON L4M 2Y1

Dear Messrs:

I am formally supporting the application submitted by Mrs. Loan de Bock to have the name of her husband, Constable Joshua de Bock, added to the Canadian Police and Peace Officers' Memorial. Constable de Bock was an Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) member who died by suicide on August 20, 2018.

Further, I support having Joshua's name, and the names of any other officers who died by way of suicide attributed to mental health injuries experienced in the line of duty, added to the Ontario Police Memorial and the OPP Association Honour Wall, located at OPP General Headquarters in Orillia.

In considering Mrs. De Bock's request, I noted that the criteria for consideration to have an officer's name added to the memorials does not include or exclude officers who have died by way of suicide attributed to mental health injuries experienced in the line of duty.

As you are most likely aware, the Ontario Human Rights Commission has determined that not including the names of officers who die from mental health injuries experienced in the line of duty on the Toronto Police Service's (TPS) Memorial Wall is discriminatory. While this is specific to the TPS Memorial Wall, the same criteria should also apply to all memorials.

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The Ontario government introduced presumptive legislation for first responders in an effort to validate the impact this career may have on an individual's mental health. While there is no single mental illness that is exclusively responsible for death by suicide, formally recognizing officers such as Constable de Bock further reduces the persistent stigma facing first responders who experience mental health injuries.

I believe that the names of officers who have died by way of suicide attributed to mental health injuries experienced in the line of duty are most worthy of being honoured in some manner by the National Memorial, the Ontario Police Memorial and the OPPA Honour Wall.

It is time to challenge the opposition to this issue. It is time to change the dialogue that mental health disability is a sign of weakness. This is an opportunity for us as police leaders to be the voice for change and recognize those who have died by way of suicide attributed to mental health injuries experienced in the line of duty. I believe these members and their families deserve our recognition, and it is up to us to have the dialogue as to how.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G.J. Couture', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

G.J. (Gary) Couture
Interim Commissioner